



## **BRANCH COUNTY COURTHOUSE**

31 DIVISION STREET • COLDWATER • MICHIGAN • 49036

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January 22, 2014

Environmental Management Support, Inc.

ATTN: Don West

8601 Georgia Avenue, Suite 500

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Phone: 301.589.5318

Subject: FY 2014 EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant Application, Branch County, Michigan

Dear Mr. West:

Branch County is submitting the enclosed application for two U.S. EPA Brownfields Assessment Grants - \$200,000 for Hazardous Substances and \$200,000 for Petroleum. These grants will be utilized to perform environmental site assessment activities, as well as community outreach and cleanup planning, at Brownfield sites throughout Branch County, Michigan. The County needs these grants to support the continued success of its brownfields program which was funded with a FY2007 EPA Brownfield Assessment Grants. The County was successful using previous assessment grants to stimulate brownfields redevelopment, however those funds are depleted. Previous EPA assessment grant funding through the County supported redevelopment including manufacturing, general commercial developments, recreational space, and renewable energy.

Despite the success the County's poverty rate and unemployment rate are still twice the average as compared to the State of Michigan. Similarly, the cancer rate in the County is increasing while the overall cancer rate in the State of Michigan is decreasing. The County needs additional assessment grant funds to help sustain momentum of its brownfields program to put residents back to work and improve the local standard of living. The EPA assessment grants are an incentive that have (e.g., proposed green training center at a former foundry in Coldwater) and will continue to attract sustainable practices and businesses to the County. Removing blighted properties will not only reduce crime and improve the overall health of nearby neighborhoods, but also increase property values and create jobs. The County has lined up an array of community and state organizations to support its brownfields program. Supporting organizations include Michigan Works who will help with job creation, Branch Community Health Agency with human health risk screening of sites, and the Branch County Community Foundation that will be a conduit for like-minded people to connect their individual resources.

The FY2014 EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant will allow the Branch County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and the local community governments it represents to more rapidly clear the impending hurdles to redevelopment. It is the goal of Branch County to protect and enhance agricultural land, natural resources, tourism, recreation, and green space while providing for quality housing and new commercial and industrial development. These goals cannot fully be achieved with confidence without having identified sites where redevelopment may be inhibited by the clean-up activities. These sites will not be addressed with any significance without funding. Receiving a Brownfields Assessment Grant is critical for economic development in Branch County. The County has experience leveraging previous EPA assessment grant funds with over \$8 million of private investment leveraged from use of previous EPA grants, and understands how to utilize other financial incentives to support brownfields redevelopment. FY2007 EPA assessment grant funds created over 100 jobs and were utilized to create Brownfield Plans utilizing Tax Increment Financing. A successful proposal will allow the County to continue to aggressively move forward in its efforts.

a. **Applicant Information:**

Branch County  
31 Division Street  
Coldwater, Michigan 49036  
(517) 279-5104

b. **DUNS Number:** 078924164

c. **Funding Requested:**

<b>Grant Type:</b>	Brownfield Assessment Grant
<b>Federal Funds Requested:</b>	\$200,000 Hazardous and \$200,000 Petroleum
<b>Contamination:</b>	Hazardous and Petroleum Substances
<b>Assessment Grant:</b>	Community-Wide

d. **Location:** Branch County, Michigan

e. **Site Specific Property Name and Address:** Not Applicable

f. **Contacts:**

**Project Director:**

Bud Norman, Branch County Administrator  
31 Division Street  
Coldwater, Michigan 49036  
(517) 279-5104; Facsimile: (517) 278-4130  
Email: [bnorman@countyofbranch.com](mailto:bnorman@countyofbranch.com)

**Highest Ranking Elected Official:**

Donald Vrablic, Chairperson; Branch County Commissioners  
31 Division Street  
Coldwater, Michigan 49036  
Phone: (517) 279-7680; Facsimile: (517) 278-4130  
Email: [dvrablic@countyofbranch.com](mailto:dvrablic@countyofbranch.com)

g. **Date Submitted:** January 22, 2014

h. **Project Period:** Three Years

i. **Population:** According to the Census the 2010 population of Branch County is 45,248.

Branch County welcomes the opportunity to work with EPA on its brownfield initiative. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Bud Norman  
Branch County Administrator

Cc: Deborah Orr, USEPA Region 5

**APPLICATION FOR EPA BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENT GRANTS**  
**Branch County Site Assessment Program**  
**RANKING CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT GRANT**

**1. Community Need [45 points]**

**a. Targeted Community and Brownfields [20 points]**

i. Targeted Community Descriptions (5 points) Branch County (the County) has been, and continues to be, a rural area with the majority of its commercial and industrial development focused in small communities. The lack of a central large economic base means it is difficult for the County to attract businesses and build funding reserves needed to assess contaminated sites and encourage development. These small communities make up a combined 13 mi<sup>2</sup> or approximately 3% of the County's 507 mi<sup>2</sup> area<sup>1</sup>. They are key areas targeted by the County's Brownfields program and include the cities of Coldwater and Bronson, Villages of Quincy, Sherwood, and Union City. Approximately 9%, or 46 mi<sup>2</sup>, of the County's land area comprises the bulk of development for residential, commercial, and industrial sectors. Similarly the majority of the 43,868 residents (2012 Census Bureau Estimate) live within these small communities in close proximity to known and potential Brownfields sites. Despite the rural setting industrial and manufacturing is a key component of the local economy. Smelting iron ore from nearby deposits (Union City) occurred as early as the 1840's. Manufacturing was being conducted in numerous communities by the end of the 1800's and continues to this day. The County is now home to many manufacturers that supply parts to the auto industry.

The County's Master Land Use Plan outlines land use trends for the following areas: 1) agricultural (70% land use); 2) residential (2% land use); 3) commercial (319 acres); and 4) industrial (1% of land use). Of particular note in the Land Use Plan, is the identification of a trend over recent decades for central business districts within the local communities to experience difficulty in keeping retail structures occupied, indicating the increased trend towards urban fringe development. In addition, the land use plan describes increased concern over the liabilities associated with both past environmental pollution and the potential for future liability, and the need for Brownfields incentives and redevelopment of these sites.

ii. Demographic Information (5 points) The following table identifies unemployment, poverty rates, income, and minority indicators for the communities of high priority to the County's Brownfields Program.

	Village of Union City	Village of Sherwood	Village of Quincy	City of Bronson	City of Coldwater	Branch County	Michigan	National
Population: <sup>2</sup>	1,599	309	1,652	2,341	10,887	43,868	9,895,622	308,745,538
Unemployment: <sup>3</sup>	9.3%	10.4	8.5%	13%	8.3%	10.1%	8.8%	6.7%
Job Growth <sup>4</sup>	-23.3%	-22.98%	-9.6%	-14.2%	-17.14%	-18.2%	X	X
Poverty Rate: <sup>5</sup>	22.4%	26.7%	26.6%	28.5%	18.6%	17.3%	16.3%	14.9%
Percent Minority: <sup>6</sup>	4.9%	4.9%	4.5%	18.4%	10.5%	9.13%	23.4%	36.3%
Per Capita Income: <sup>6</sup>	\$15,604	\$13,654	\$16,566	\$15,113	\$18,041	\$19,633	\$25,547	\$28,051
Median Household Income: <sup>6</sup>	\$36,935	\$36,786	\$36,058	\$30,104	\$37,416	\$42,995	\$48,471	\$53,046

<sup>1</sup> Data is from the Michigan DTMB Office of Shared Solutions

<sup>2</sup> Data is from the 2010 U.S. Census data and is available at <http://www.census.gov/>.

<sup>3</sup> National unemployment rate is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' announcement of December 2013. Unemployment rates for the State of Michigan and County Subdivisions are from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and is available at <http://www.michiganbusiness.org>.

<sup>4</sup> Data is from the MEDC and is available at <http://www.michiganbusiness.org>.

<sup>5</sup> Data is from 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate Selected Economic Characteristics at Census Factfinder and is available at <http://www.factfinder2census.gov>.

<sup>6</sup> Data was calculated using 2010 Census results: Total population, and Not Hispanic or Latino White Alone.

iii. Brownfields (5 points) Legacy Brownfields sites and current operations combined are a risk to the local County communities. While the County was successful in using United States (U.S.) Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Hazardous Substances and Petroleum Assessment Grants from 2007 through 2012 to stimulate Brownfields development, those funds are depleted and more work must be completed. Known Brownfields in the County consist of the following:

Potential Brownfields Identifying Criteria	# of Sites	Media Affected	Known Contaminants
BEAs (Baseline Environmental Assessments)	50	soil, soil gas, groundwater	heavy metals, petroleum products, chlorinated solvents, etc.
UST (Underground Storage Tank) (active)	50	unknown	unknown
UST (former)	171	unknown	Unknown
LUST (Leaking UST)	82	soil, soil gas, groundwater	petroleum products

The vast majority of these sites are located within the five primary communities of the County. The table above illustrates that there are at least 132 known contaminated sites in the county with many more unassessed properties needing investigation.

Historically neighborhoods in the County's communities were placed directly adjacent to industrial facilities to accommodate workers. In the City of Coldwater, negative impacts including blighted Brownfields sites in that are keeping nearby housing values low and crime rates high. This community also has the largest Arab American minority population in the State of Michigan (SOM) outside of the City of Dearborn. This at risk community lives in the vicinity of two known contaminated sites including a former foundry and coal burning power plant. Current land use planning has designated industrial parks away from densely populated areas; however, potential commercial Brownfields sites (i.e., gasoline stations) are still commonly located near neighborhoods. Real and perceived negative impacts to the local communities include lower housing values, blighted properties with dangerous debris (e.g., metal and broken glass), and health effects from migrating groundwater plumes resulting in drinking water restrictions, volatilization to indoor air concerns, and poor air quality from wind-blown erosion of contaminated soils.

iv. Cumulative Environmental Issues (5 points) A significant environmental justice hurdle for the County to overcome is the fallout of business and citizens leaving the county. Decreasing population centers between 2000 and 2012 have contributed to a rise in vacant businesses and homes within the population centers. These blighted properties need assessment for proper redevelopment. Specifically the older neighborhoods near known Brownfields sites are the hardest hit with abandoned properties. The City of Coldwater has spent over \$300K assessing and removing blighted properties since 2008.

These shuttered businesses have left behind underutilized, unsafe, and blighted Brownfields sites, while residents have left behind dilapidated and blighted homes. According to a the Branch County Snapshot Survey, the County ranked higher than the state average in rape; sex offenses; narcotic offenses; family and children crimes; and disorderly conduct crimes. These shuttered and blighted Brownfields and homes create a breeding ground for crime. Based on a Roadmaps County Survey, the County was ranked as low as 66 out of 82 Michigan counties in the Physical Environment category in 2010. The Physical Environment category included air quality, water quality, and accessibility to fresh food. Further complicating this issue is the fact that the County has lost 40% of its State Police officer as funding was cut in half in 2010.

**b. Impacts on Targeted Community [15 points]** In 2012, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute completed a Health Rankings Project in Branch County. The County was ranked on morbidity, the overall health of the population. The County ranked 57 out of 82 Michigan counties surveyed for the morbidity criteria. The County is home to the Community Health Center of Branch County, a diagnostic and emergency hospital located in Coldwater. According to their report, 16% of adults in Branch County are uninsured, and more staggering, the ratio of primary care providers in the County is 2,180:1, compared to the average in the SOM of 874:1. As stated above the majority of the County's population lives in direct vicinity to Brownfields sites and they do not have appropriate access to health care providers. The county needs additional assessment grants to evaluate

the nature and extent of contamination within the community to conduct cleanup planning that support development activities which will reduce the disproportionate health and welfare impact of the Brownfields. These statistics echo concerns identified in the County Land Use Plan drafted over a decade earlier, which expressed the following concerns about the County citizens' health: 1) poor provider participation in managed care; 2) a high percentage of mothers with less than a high school diploma; 3) the highest incidence of rape cases in the state; 4) high death rates from chronic diseases (ischemic heart disease, diabetes, COPD, breast cancer) and suicides; and 5) a high rate of water/food borne illnesses. Priority Brownfields located in the county's sensitive neighborhoods present a threat to the general health and welfare of the community through potential direct contact, ingestion, airborne exposures to contaminants, and unsafe blighted abandoned properties and buildings. According to the Branch County Community Health Agency cancer incidence rates continue to rise while the population decreases. With the at risk population located near the contaminated sites, we are seeing the overall cancer average number of incidences for the County increase from 426.6 in 1996 to 442.3 in 2010, while the cancer average number of incidences trend for the SOM decreased during this time period.

**c. Financial Need [10 points]**

i. Economic Conditions (5 points) While the impact of Brownfields on local communities affects health issues, economic conditions are reason for the need for more Brownfields assessment funding. The need for funding began with the demise of the County's industrial base which culminated during the 2007 recession. EPA assessment grant funding from 2008 through 2012 was vital in helping the communities revive blighted properties, but more help is needed. Increasing overseas competition and cheap labor are still steadily downsizing and closing plants. The County and the SOM still have unemployment rates above the national average. Similarly, the County and Michigan continue to lose its population as young professionals and college graduates, the state's hope for the future, leave the state for better opportunities (MI Dept. of Community Health).

The County operates on an annual budget of \$12.9M, and in the past five years has been forced to reduce its staff by 10 to 20% to accommodate budget shortfalls and a sagging economy. The hardest hit department is the Building Department, which lost 66% of its workforce in 2010 due to a lack of new construction, only 19 building permits were pulled in 2011 ([www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com)) and redevelopment and a rise in foreclosures and forfeitures. Branch County and the local units of government in the County currently lack the funding to properly characterize and assess their Brownfields sites, much less provide the funding to clean them up.

In 2008, the County was awarded two Brownfields Assessment Grants for hazardous and petroleum substance sites, totaling \$400K; however, this funding has been depleted as of December 2012. A successful proposal will allow the County to continue to aggressively move forward in its Brownfields efforts. Numerous opportunities exist to redevelop Brownfields sites, but the County has little to no financial resources to facilitate and support these projects. Currently, the Branch County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BCBRA) has several Phase II projects on hold, including a former City-owned dump site, Superfund site, and former foundry due to lack of funding for assessment purposes.

ii. Economic Effects of Brownfields (5 points) Unemployment, poverty rates, per capita income, and job growth in the County are worse than the average in Michigan and nationwide. Job growth in the County ranges from -9 to -23 percent. In the City of Bronson the poverty rate and unemployment rate are twice the national average. Home prices in the City of Coldwater are down 15% from November 2012. Similarly, according to RealtyTrac.com the Crime Index for the City of Coldwater is at 362.1 above the SOM average and the national average. According to Jeff Budd of the City of Coldwater, the city has spent \$300K since 2008 addressing foreclosed and blighted properties. These properties have reduced the tax base, depress property values, and as stated above created a high rate of crime.

All of these factors have created a burden on municipal systems and disinvestment in the community. Success stories from Branch County's fiscal year 2008 EPA assessment grant show that with funding assistance for assessment and due care a blighted property can be utilized to leverage recreational opportunities and renewable energy infrastructure. A former foundry property (Branch County EPA assessment site) in the City of Coldwater is currently in the process of completing a feasibility study for a

solar array field and an Environmental Construction Management Plan for recreational fields. This redevelopment was made possible by EPA grant funds and chosen redevelopment concepts was completed through public input by the local community.

## 2. **Project Description and Feasibility of Success [50 points]**

### a. **Project Description [25 points]**

i. (10 points) As depicted in the County's 2011 Draft Master Plan, the goals and objectives are specific to land use categories. The County's Brownfields Assessment Grants Project will further the targeted community's land use and revitalization plans by providing funding to attract the type of development that will aide to achieve the aims of the desired land use for Branch County:

Land Use	Supportive Assessment Grant Activities
Residential Development	The Grant funds will aid existing residential and other Brownfields properties to be redeveloped and reused to their fullest extent by providing assessment activities to support developers/purchasers with necessary due diligence activities and cleanup planning tools.
Agricultural Development	While agricultural land is not typically considered a potential Brownfields, adjoining and nearby contaminated properties can render the use of an abandoned agricultural property worthless. The use of Grant funds will allow the reuse and redevelopment of these potentially contaminated sites while keeping with the vision of the County to preserve the maximum extent of possible and productive agricultural land.
Commercial Development	In order to provide the retail, offices, restaurants, etc. needed to improve the economic condition of communities within the County, Grant funds will be utilized to provide environmental assessments on eligible Brownfields properties to entice developers and promote the reuse and redevelopment of the these scarred properties to productive use. Utilizing the Grant funds for cleanup planning will allow developers to leverage other state and local financial incentives.
Industrial Development	Industrial Development can be a huge proponent of job growth and security. In order to assist the County with their goal, Grant funds will be utilized to conduct assessment activities on abandoned industrial sites within the County to promote redevelopment.
Recreational Development	Grant funds to be used toward assessments and cleanup planning will be a great asset to aid the County with their goal to enhance the natural features of the County by providing the means to assess Brownfields sites that have potential to be transformed into green spaces.
Transportation	With the economic vitality of the County continuing to improve through efforts aided by the Grant funds, improved transportation services will be needed to assist the County's goals to provide efficient, safe and convenient access to the transportation network. Grant funds will be utilized to perform assessment activities to aid area transportation authorities in this goal.
Utilities	Through assistance of Grant funds, cleanup planning can include the use of tax increment financing (TIF) to support infrastructure needed to achieve the goals of the County.
Community Facilities	Grant funds will be utilized by the County to complete assessments of Brownfields properties slated for redevelopment into high quality community facilities (e.g. recreation and community centers, social service agencies, etc.). The County will partner with community organizations; and state and local agencies to leverage other available incentives.

The County proposes to utilize EPA grant funds to facilitate and encourage redevelopment of the County's Brownfields by eliminating perceived stigmas and fears associated with purchasing and utilizing Brownfields sites while supporting progress towards **EPA Goal 3: Cleaning Up Communities and Advancing Sustainable Development** and with **Objective 3.1: Promote Sustainable and Livable Communities**. Ultimately The County will utilize EPA Assessment Grant funded assessment work to address the following:

**Eligibility:** the County uses a Site Eligibility Determination form that it developed in coordination with EPA Region 5 project managers. This form is prepared for every site nominated for funding to ensure that the site is eligible using the grant. the County submits this Site Eligibility Determination form to the EPA for eligibility determination on hazardous substance sites and to the MDEQ Brownfields Redevelopment Unit for eligibility determination on petroleum substance sites prior to beginning assessment work.



*Assessments:* Assessments will be the primary focus of the of the Grant funds. With the at least 132 known contaminated sites in the County as indicated in Section 1, these funds will be heavily utilized to conduct the needed assessments on these and other unknown impacted sites to allow for redevelopment and all of the benefits associated including: stimulation of the economy; job creation; increased tax base, etc.

Assessments anticipated to be conducted on these identified Brownfields sites under the Grant are as follows:

- Phase I Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) completed by a qualified Environmental Professional in accordance with All Appropriate Inquiry (AAI) requirements and current ASTM standards. Up to 14 Phase I ESAs are anticipated to be completed under these grants.
- Phase II ESAs completed on those sites where recognized environmental conditions (RECs) are identified in Phase I ESAs. Depending on site size and magnitude of anticipated contamination up to 13 Phase II ESAs are anticipated to be completed under these grants.
- BEAs and Due Care Plans completed on sites where contamination is identified at concentrations above current MDEQ Part 201 Residential Cleanup Criteria (RCC). These reports are expected to protect new owners from cleanup liability under Michigan's Part 201 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended (NREPA). These reports can also be submitted to the MDEQ for disclosure upon request of the purchaser or developer.
- Cleanup Plans/Brownfields Redevelopment Plans completed on sites where site conditions, cleanup plans, and/or eligible investment warrant. These plans will allow for tax increment revenue (TIR) capture once approved by the BCBRA, the MDEQ and/or the Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF). In addition, as previously achieved under The County's 2008 Brownfields Assessment Grants, when site redevelopment and investment allow, the BCBRA intends to capture a portion of the TIR to continue allocation of funds to their Brownfields Revolving Loan fund to sustain the promotion and allowance for assessment activities long after Grant funds are exhausted. Up to 10 Cleanup Plans are anticipated to be completed under these grants.

*Community Outreach and Area-Wide Planning:* The County intends to use multiple communication conduits to ensure the public is aware of the county-wide Brownfields program, and the status of any sites that may be under some phase of redevelopment, including: (1) sponsoring community outreach and education forums (success was achieved with this method during 2008 Brownfields Assessment Grants); and (2) advertising and encouraging public participation during monthly Branch County Brownfields Redevelopment Authority (BCBRA) meetings, as required by Michigan Public Act (P.A.) 381 of 1996, as amended. Since the course of the 2008 Brownfields Assessment Grants, the County has kept an open line of communication with its residents through public meetings. In response, several potential developers, builders, real estate brokers and citizens have been present at meetings to discuss concerns, develop success stories, and press releases for the local media that focus on the positive impacts to local environmental conditions and public infrastructure improvements that have occurred within the County as a result of Brownfields redevelopment made possible by the County's previous Brownfields Grants.

*Project Tracking:* As with the previous Brownfields Assessment Grants received by the County in 2008, the County plans to continue their process of tracking and measuring progress based on two elements. First, progress will be measured against the outputs identified by task in the work plan developed under the cooperative agreement. This will be the key document in identifying outputs and the timing of those outputs. This progress will then be included in quarterly reports submitted to the EPA. Second, the County will be tracking progress on EPA's Assessment, Cleanup and Redevelopment Exchange System (ACRES) on-line tracking system, including information such as: site location, history, known contamination, remedial achievements, job creation, etc.

As the County has identified in their Draft Master Plan, future development within the county will continue to be focused along the US-12 corridor, and within existing Industrial Park locations. The City of Coldwater currently has 110 acres for sale that is zoned industrial with rail line access. The Village of Quincy currently has 34 acres for sale that is zoned industrial with rail line access. The Village of Union City has 80 acres and the City of Bronson has 7 acres for sale zoned industrial. With 46.39 square miles of developable area, priority will be made to locate new industry into these areas and prevent further urban fringe development and also encroachment of industry into population centers. This redevelopment strategy will maximize the

use of EPA Assessment Grant Funds while positively impacting the residents of Branch County. In addition, the County looks to continue their success from the 2008 Brownfields Assessment Grants by utilizing these Grants to continue to make blighted properties marketable, and decrease the amount of exposure threats to the general public. Properties that the County has provided assessment funding for are profiled on a map on their website [http://www.countyofbranch.com/dept.taf?dept\\_id=136](http://www.countyofbranch.com/dept.taf?dept_id=136), with full descriptions of assessments performed.

ii. (5 points) Mr. Bud Norman has been the County's Administrator/Controller for over the last seven years and has successfully managed a budget of \$45M. Mr. Norman successfully administered the County's 2008 Brownfields Assessment Grants, and is well placed to serve as the Grant project manager. With their lead in place, the County anticipates selecting a qualified environmental consultant to assist with community outreach efforts, environmental site assessments, and cleanup plans for qualifying sites, within two months following award of the grants. The County will issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to obtain competitive proposals in accordance with the County's purchasing policy and applicable federal procurement rules (40 CFR § 31.36). The project consultant will be selected based upon proposal quality, demonstration of previous experience with similar projects, price, and qualifications. Immediately following contractor procurement, the County anticipates commencing site selection procedures as described in the following Section to begin assessment activities as soon as possible to ensure completion of the Grant funds within 3 years.

iii. Site Selection (10 points) To begin the process for prioritizing and selecting sites, the County will initially conduct outreach sessions with local units of government, citizens, non-profit organizations, real estate, banking institutions and development professionals to familiarize local residents with Brownfields incentives and options for redeveloping vacant and blighted commercial and industrial properties within the county. Nomination forms, developed during the County's 2008 Brownfields Assessment Grants, will be presented on the Branch County Brownfields website and provided to the attending community members to help identify potential sites throughout the county. The County will then expand their existing Brownfields inventory to include at least 25 new Brownfields sites and prioritize the inventory to support environmental assessments at targeted properties. Priority will be given to those sites which score well against the following criteria developed by Branch County: 1) is the property currently in operation; 2) is the property located within an existing city or village, or along a targeted transportation corridor; 3) is the property currently identified on any federal, state, or local environmental databases, or is the property perceived to be contaminated based on an industrial past; 4) is the property in close proximity to existing municipal well fields or wellhead protection areas; 5) is the property marketable for future redevelopment, or could redevelopment of the property spur additional development in the area; and 6) is there existing public infrastructure available to the site. Properties will be given a 1, 2, or 3 in each of the aforementioned categories and the highest ranking properties will be slated for the use of assessment funds ensuring a fair and objective selection of sites. After sites are selected, site access will be granted through a site access agreement which will be signed by the existing property owner and provided to the County.

**b. Task Description and Budget Table [20 points]**

i. Task Description (15 points)

Branch County understands the importance of conducting an inventory and prioritization of the Brownfields sites. These efforts were conducted in full and were ongoing during the previous assessment grants. Branch County will continue this effort at no costs to the proposed assessment grants. Branch County and its project team will use existing government databases and site nominations, conduct additional interviews with municipal and community partners and inputting property nominations/data obtained under Task 1, Community Outreach.

*Task 1: Community Outreach: \$16,000.* Involvement of key stakeholders and the general public is integral for a successful Brownfield redevelopment program. Branch County will use the funds allocated in this task to facilitate community outreach and involvement. The associated costs will fund coordinating/conducting community outreach programs and meetings as well as the costs to prepare, print and mail project and site information and marketing materials. These tasks will provide information and take input on the plans and progress of Brownfield investigation and cleanup planning activities to the general public as well as marketing sites for future development. In addition, outreach will include GIS mapping as a Brownfields



tool to produce maps of available tracts of land for developers. Currently, properties that the County has provided assessment funding for are profiled on a map on their website [http://www.countyofbranch.com/dept.taf?dept\\_id=136](http://www.countyofbranch.com/dept.taf?dept_id=136), with full descriptions of assessments performed. Branch County, under its Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, will conduct monthly Brownfield authority meetings to conduct community outreach, as well as conduct the business of implementing the assessment grants. Additionally, Branch County will hold at least two community-wide public meetings focused solely on community outreach.

**Task 2: Environmental Assessments: \$137,000.** An Environmental Professional will be retained to perform Phase I and Phase II ESAs at targeted Brownfield sites. Phase I ESAs will be conducted in accordance with the ASTM E-1527-13 standard and the All Appropriate Inquiry (AAI) rule. Phase II ESAs will also be conducted by the Environmental Professional to complete All Appropriate Inquiry at targeted sites. The Phase II ESAs will include geophysical surveys to locate buried tanks, containers, vessels, etc., Phase II drilling and sampling of soil, water, soil gas, etc. as needed to fulfill the AAI rule. Phase II ESAs will be conducted following procedures specified in a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and site-specific Sampling and Analysis Plans (SAPs) and Health and Safety Plans (HASPs) to be approved by the Region 5 EPA Project Manager. The QAPP and SAPs/HASPs will be completed in accordance with EPA and Michigan's Part 201 requirements (Michigan's Voluntary Cleanup Program). Phase II ESAs will also include the preparation of Baseline Environmental Assessments (BEAs) under Part 201 to allow for environmental liability protection to eligible prospective owners/operators of target sites. The costs for completing Phase I and Phase II ESAs will vary depending on the complexity of each site. Phase I ESA will generally range from \$2,300 to \$3,500 and Phase II ESAs will range from \$15,000 to \$30,000 per site. The environmental site assessment budget for petroleum sites is based on conducting 8 Phase I ESAs at an average cost of \$2,400 and 7 Phase II ESAs an average cost of \$19,900. The environmental site assessment budget for hazardous sites is based on conducting 6 Phase I ESAs at an average cost of \$2,600 and 6 Phase II ESAs an average cost of \$23,816. Therefore, the proposed outputs include fourteen (14) Phase I ESAs and thirteen (13) Phase II ESAs.

**Task 3: Cleanup Planning: \$50,000.** An Environmental Professional will be retained to perform cleanup and redevelopment planning as need for target sites where such activities will facilitate redevelopment. Cleanup and redevelopment planning may include preparing Remedial Action Plans (RAPs), Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives (ABCAs), evaluation of institutional and engineering controls, and preparation of Brownfield Plans and Work Plans to support securing tax increment financing (TIF) under the Michigan Brownfield Redevelopment Act (Act 381 of 1996, as amended). The cleanup planning budget and proposed output is based on conducting ten (10) cleanup plans at an average cost of \$5,000 each.

**Task 4: Programmatic Activities: \$17,000.** Conduct contractor procurement, quarterly progress reporting, updating the ACRES database, financial reporting, travel, and supplies. These costs will help to cover some personnel time related to management of the grant, travel as well as supplies and minor costs such as postage and printing. Travel will include attending the EPA Brownfield Conferences and other applicable conferences such as the Michigan Land Bank annual conference and semiannual conferences held by the Michigan Association of Counties. The budget for programmatic activities is based on the following project outputs:

- 100 hours of personnel time at \$50/hr. to manage at a cost of \$5,000
- Attendance of 6 conferences at an average travel cost of \$500 each for a total of \$3,000
- Miscellaneous supplies including postage and printing at an estimated cost of \$1,000
- Completion of 14 reports (12 quarterly progress reports, 2 annual financial/DBE reports) at an average cost of \$571.42 each for a total of \$8,000

ii. Budget Table (5 points)

**Petroleum Sites**

Budget Categories	Project Tasks				
	Task 1: Community Outreach	Task 2: Environmental Assessments	Task 3: Cleanup Planning	Task 4: Programmatic Activities	Total
Personnel	\$2,500			\$2,500	\$5,000
Travel				\$1,500	\$1,500
Supplies	\$500			\$500	\$1,000
Contractual	\$5,000	\$158,500	\$25,000	\$4,000	\$192,500
Total	\$8,000	\$158,500	\$25,000	\$8,500	\$200,000

**Hazardous Substance Sites**

Budget Categories	Project Tasks				
	Task 1: Community Outreach	Task 2: Environmental Assessments	Task 3: Cleanup Planning	Task 4: Programmatic Activities	Total
Personnel	\$2,500			\$2,500	\$5,000
Travel				\$1,500	\$1,500
Supplies	\$500			\$500	\$1,000
Contractual	\$5,000	\$158,500	\$25,000	\$4,000	\$192,500
Total	\$8,000	\$158,500	\$25,000	\$8,500	\$200,000

**c. Ability to Leverage [5 points]** The County understands the Assessment Grant is a vital catalyst for a Brownfields redevelopment project. The Assessment Grant can fund the collection of site condition data needed to support project feasibility, design, liability management, and remediation planning. However, this redevelopment support alone is rarely sufficient to ensure a successful redevelopment. Additional human and financial capital in the form of in-kind services, grants, loans, tax abatements and credits, and/or tax increment financing usually are needed singly or in combination to make a project economically feasible by paying for additional environmental assessments and remediation, hazardous materials assessment and abatement, above- and below-grade demolition, site preparation, infrastructure upgrades, etc. One of the County's goals is to further develop its Brownfields program, created in 2008 and gain more experience in creatively leveraging resources for redevelopment.

In addition to EPA Brownfields grants, other Brownfields specific funding sources are available including:

- **Tax Increment Financing.** A BRA can use tax increment financing to repay bonds used to finance environmental costs, reimburse the BRA for funds provided to conduct environmental activities, or reimburse developers for environmental costs incurred on a property. In addition, when EPA grant funds are used, the funds can be repaid to the Authority with tax increments and deposited in the Site Remediation Revolving Fund, to be used for Brownfields cleanups at other properties, as needed. During the course of the County's pilot Brownfields Assessment Grants between 2008 and 2012, the County was able to approve its first Brownfields Plan, and receive approval from the Michigan Economic Growth Authority (MEGA, currently MSF) for school tax capture on non-environmental activities, that aided in the redevelopment of a Brownfields site into a thriving Culver's Restaurant. The success of this Brownfields Plan allowed the County to establish its local site remediation revolving fund (LSRRF) which is currently in its first year of tax increment revenue capture. The LSRRF is estimated to capture over \$110K by the completion of the plan.
- **MDEQ Brownfields Redevelopment Grants and Loans.** The MDEQ can provide grants and loans of up to \$2.5M to local units of government for response activities at Brownfields properties where new economic development has been identified. The grants and loans are selected based on need and can be awarded to a local unit of government or other applicable grantee following submittal of a complete application. Communities that have applied for these grants and loans in the past have had a 100% success rate of award depending on need and availability of funds.

- *MDEQ Clean Michigan Initiative Brownfields Cleanups.* Local units of government can nominate sites to the MDEQ for a MDEQ conducted cleanup. The nominations go through a priority ranking process and selected sites are then submitted to the legislature for appropriations.
- *Other financing options can include:* a Michigan Community Development Block Grant, Michigan Economic Development Job Training program, and US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

An additional form of funding the County and the Branch County Economic Growth Alliance (BCEGA) can help new developers apply for is through the Michigan State Housing and Development Authority (MSHDA). According to the Snapshot of Branch County, 2004, by the year 2020, the County's population above age 60 will increase by 40%, citing an immediate need for senior housing in the County, which is covered through MSHDA funding.

The City of Bronson and the City of Coldwater in Branch County have been designated by the SOM as Core Communities Incentives, unique to Core Communities, target critical needs of older communities and include new housing development, redevelopment of obsolete facilities and development of contaminated properties. Additionally, the Cities of Bronson and Coldwater are also designated as MSHDA Eligible Distressed Areas, in which businesses can waive personal property taxes for new equipment that is purchased by eligible businesses.

The County has committed staff resources, general funds, and in-kind services to support its Brownfields program, and has demonstrated the ability to leverage other funds to complete Brownfields projects.

### **3. Community Engagement and Partnerships [35 points]**

**a. Plan for Involving Targeted Community & Other Stakeholders; and Communicating Project Progress [15 points]** Branch County currently conducts monthly BRA meetings, and encourages public participation in these meetings. Participation varies and includes city managers from the City of Coldwater and City of Bronson, other representatives from local communities, land use planners, property owners, and developers. Meeting dates, times, location, and minutes from each meeting are posted on the Branch County website. Outreach to the local community will be completed through numerous local and state agencies including each community in the county (e.g., City of Coldwater, City of Bronson etc.), downtown development authorities, and local chamber of commerce in direct contact with neighborhood groups and local businesses. During the BRA meetings, new site nominations are presented, public input requested, discussion of existing assessments, clean-up planning and economic development are conducted. To further encourage community involvement in these new Grants, the County will initially conduct outreach sessions with local units of government, citizens, non-profit organizations, real estate, banking institutions and development professionals to familiarize local residents with Brownfields incentives and options for redeveloping vacant and blighted commercial and industrial properties within the county.

Notifications of community-wide meetings and project successes will be achieved through public announcements in The Daily Reporter, use of the local WTBV radio station and cable public access channels. The County is considering a new initiative that would include utilizing social media such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter to keep the public abreast of Brownfields redevelopment activities within the County. In addition, meetings of the Brownfields Authority are often attended by a member of The Daily Reporter for information to include in the local paper. The City of Coldwater has spent a great deal of time working with the local Arabic American community to redevelop two Brownfields sites within their community. Input from the community has been used to propose the redevelop of an abandoned foundry property with recreational fields and other park amenities.

Informational pamphlets describing the role of the BCBRA in implementing the EPA assessment grants, incentives packages available to area developers, and information on what designates a Brownfields were created with the last EPA grant and distributed to several local businesses to put on display. Due to the 9.1% of people in the County who do not speak English as their first language, interpreters from Michigan State University's language programs will translate during meetings and prepare pamphlets available in Arabic and Spanish to accommodate all persons.

An effective Brownfields program requires that partnerships be developed between local communities, neighborhood groups, Brownfields redevelopment authorities and the MDEQ. Site nominations are

accepted on a continual basis through any member of the BCBRA as well as by public nomination during meetings. Site nominations are formally presented publicly each month. When redevelopment projects using capture tax increment of local property taxes, local community must approve of the new property use proposed by a developer and a BEA must be submitted to the MDEQ. In order to use Brownfields redevelopment incentives, the project must be approved in public meetings by the BCBRA.

In addition to its local community, the County collaborates with the following regional organizations: Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Economic Growth Corporation, Michigan Department of Transportation, Michigan Works, and Michigan Association of Counties. Previous projects completed under the EPA Assessment Grants awarded to the County from 2008 to 2012 include cost sharing between the City of Coldwater and EPA Assessment Grant, and at least two Brownfields Plans that were approved with public involvement by BCBRA and through planning processes with local jurisdictions.

**b. Partnerships with Government Agencies [10 points]**

i. (5 points) Partnership development is key to a successful Brownfields Assessment Grant. For example, the local and state health departments are consulted when environmental assessment due care investigations reveal potential off site problems. In effect the greatest tool a local health department can have is the shared information from Brownfields assessments. The Branch Hillsdale St. Joseph Community Health Agency (BHSJ) is currently involved with the environmental health issues facing current and perceived Brownfields properties. If contamination is identified on a property, and the potential exists for the site to negatively impact sensitive populations, especially related to off-site exposures that would not be the statutory responsibility of the local community or a non-labile developer, the BHSJ will be notified and brought in as a project partner. The BHSJ will also help to identify related toxicological issues, perform evaluations with assistance from the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry, and design and conduct notification and educational programs. As with the previous grant, the BHSJ has already nominated several sites within the County that represent a risk a danger to public health. Of concern to the BHSJ is the area west of Coldwater that exhibits levels of nitrates in drinking water wells above acceptable levels. The County will partner with the BHSJ in an effort to help delineate this area of impact and determine if infrastructure from the City of Coldwater will extend out to this commercial and residential area in the future.

ii. (5 points) The BCBRA in many ways is a partnership of local units of government within the County. The City of Coldwater, City of Bronson, and other communities in the county work closely with the BCBRA. While projects start at the neighborhood and city level they work their way up to the BCBRA for additional funds. The BCBRA relies on long-standing and close partnerships with local townships, local, state and federal agencies, and public and non-profit stakeholders to successfully administer numerous past grants. These partnerships not only lead to greater understanding of the intricate needs of each partner, but also contribute to a more effective system. Examples of agencies that the County will seek to involve with these Assessment Grant funds include: the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), HUD, and MDEQ. The County has a working relationship with project managers in the MDEQ Kalamazoo District Office, which oversees contaminated properties within Branch County.

The County will continue its on-going partnership with the MDEQ to help ensure appropriate cleanup of Brownfields sites. These programs will be conducted in compliance with the rules and guidance promulgated by the MDEQ pursuant to Michigan's Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP). When tax increment financing is used to reimburse costs of environmental cleanup activities, the MDEQ must review and approve work plans for the environmental response actions prior to implementation. The MDEQ will also review and approve Remedial Action Plans for Brownfields sites where response actions are completed.

The County has formed additional partnerships with the Michigan Association of Counties (MAC) to provide assistance through their grant services program to aid the County in implementing the EPA's programmatic activities. MAC provides vital experience and information to the county on what other counties in the state are achieving and lessons learned.

In addition, local job training and degree programs exist at the two colleges in the County. Kellogg Community College (KCC) is supporting the existing Branch County EPA grant by offering unemployed workers in the County the opportunity to gain higher education and new job skills through the No Worker

Left Behind system. New, highly skilled workers from the County then become more marketable to local area businesses. EPA assessment funds used on a previous Brownfields in the City of Coldwater have helped a project move forward that will team with KCC to create a green training center for renewable energy. As previously mentioned, in Coldwater Township's Master Plan, a lack of skilled workers was cited as a concern for the future of the County. In addition to its degree programs, Baker College is considering construction of a tech center in Coldwater.

The following select government agencies have pledged support for this grant (Refer to Attachment C):

Organization	Contact	Description of Organization and Role in Project
Branch Community Health Agency	Steve Todd 517-279-9561	Will assist community notification of contaminated areas, ensuring due care is followed such as making sure well permits are not authorized for areas of known contamination.
City of Coldwater	Jeff Budd 517-279-9501	Promote and participate in inter-governmental collaboration, assist with community outreach, promote the assessment project and provide input and feed back to the county.
City of Bronson	Mark Heydlauff 517-369-7334	Will support the County in prioritizing sites for assessment, assist with outreach, providing meeting locations, and distributing information to local businesses.
Bronson Downtown Development Authority	Derek Shaw 517-369-7334	Downtown Bronson economic development assistance facilitates partnerships, outreach, and link with additional incentives.
Michigan Works	M.J. Bruns 517-278-0200	Economic development and job training assistance, facilitates partnerships, outreach, and link with additional incentives.
Michigan Association of Counties	Steve Currie 517-372-5374	Assist with collaboration and optimization of grant funding use, Brownfields inventory mapping, and job training in association with businesses using Brownfields funding.

**c. Partnerships with Community Organizations [10 points]** Branch County looks forward to support from the following community-based organizations:

- Branch County Community Foundation: Branch County Community Foundation will assist in the public outreach of the EPA assessment grant use by combining financial and human resources in the community. Their role will be serving as a conduit for like-minded people to connect to resources with community needs. The Branch County Community Foundation will help create a pool of locally-controlled dollars and build social capital to allow the EPA assessment grants to help people help each other.
- Branch County Economic Growth Alliance (BCEGA): the BCEGA is a group of individuals working towards a goal of retaining jobs and industry within the county and promoting underutilized and vacant sites to new developers. One of the main hurdles to BCEGA's vision is the County's status as a "Border County," and being in constant competition with neighboring Indiana and Ohio for jobs creation, both of which boast lower unemployment rates. One of the problems the BCEGA encounters is the lack of funding/interest in purchasing a Brownfields site. The County will utilize the Grant funds to evaluate abandoned industry in the County, and the BCEGA will use the environmental assessments to help market to new developers. The BCEGA also utilizes manufacturing magazines to promote vacant industrial property in the county.
- Branch Conservation District: The Branch Conservation District will assist in community outreach for the grant, and help prioritize potential Brownfields sites affecting conservation areas in the County.

The following select organizations have pledged support for this grant (Refer to Attachment C):

Organization	Contact	Description of Organization and Role in Project
Branch County Community Foundation	Colleen Knight 517-278-4517	Will assist in community outreach, build social capital, and allow the EPA assessment grant to be locally controlled.
Branch Conservation District	Kathy Worst 517-278-2725	Will assist in community outreach for the grant, and help prioritize potential Brownfields sites affecting conservation areas in the County.



Organization	Contact	Description of Organization and Role in Project
Branch County Economic Growth Alliance	Lisa Miller 517-379-6908	Assist with creating, expanding, and retaining jobs in the County associated with businesses relocating on Brownfields properties.

#### **4. Project Benefits [30 points]**

**a. Health and/or Welfare and Environment [10 points]** The County has 111 lakes, 4 major rivers, and several small trout streams within its borders. In addition, residents living outside of population centers rely on shallow groundwater for drinking water purposes. These water resources are vital to most activities within the County. They are a source of pleasure for recreation and tourism; food through fishing, hunting and agriculture, and prime development property for residential, commercial and industrial land use. If existing contaminants can be identified and removed, it benefits all areas of life in the County.

Assessment grant funds will be applied to investigate former industry sites that have been abandoned in the population centers. Many of these areas and sites have been sitting for years with no environmental assessment performed due to no identification of a responsible party, or a lack of funds by a responsible party. By assessing these sites, the County will be able to provide the general public a list of findings that will disclose any human health threats (i.e. contaminated groundwater, extent of groundwater plumes, and contaminated surface soils) so that they may protect themselves from any undue exposures increasing both public health and welfare. Educating the public on Brownfields site conditions will promote equitable development by instructing individuals to protect themselves and their children from coming into direct contact with these unsecured sites.

Not only will this grant enable necessary redevelopments to occur, but it will be an important catalyst necessary to facilitate meeting many of the specific goals defined in area Master Plans. The County will: 1) redevelop struggling neighborhoods into sustainable communities, 2) create mixed commercial and residential space along Central Business Districts, 3) assess large and abandoned industrial sites where contamination affects a population center, and 4) support the acquisition of parcels for development of trailways, greenspace, or other recreational areas. The City of Coldwater and surrounding areas including Union City are a part of the Michigan South Central Power Agency (MSCPA) and are actively working towards building a renewable energy portfolio. One current project utilized funds from previous EPA assessment grants at a former foundry site is moving towards a solar array field and green training center. A partnership with MSCPA will be vital in moving more sustainable and renewable energy projects for the area. Assessing these Brownfields is the initial step towards promoting sustainable land use and supporting existing and thriving neighborhoods within the County. These efforts will promote equitable development and foster a healthy environment by incorporating green space and parks into its developments and reducing the threat of existing environmental health and safety conditions.

#### **b. Environmental Benefits from Infrastructure Reuse/Sustainable Reuse [10 points]**

i. (5 points) Branch County will implement green remediation promoting sustainable development (e.g., renewable energy production) within the municipal areas containing existing infrastructure (i.e. roads, sewers, potable water, parks, etc.), the County will make these Brownfields properties more appealing. In addition, reuse of existing infrastructure will promote diesel reduction by decreasing transportation distances necessary for supplying sites with new materials. By encouraging redevelopment of these properties, the County, and thereby the developer, will save costs on expansion of access to roads and utility corridors beyond that which is offered with the development of existing buildings will come the updating of existing utilities and equipment with more energy efficient models. Branch County will implement green remediation by promoting energy efficiency as one element of its overall sustainability program, which is anchored by growth management, land preservation, and resource recovery initiatives. The County will emphasize energy efficiency through the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program and other sustainability practices with aggressive information dissemination. Developers proposing projects in the County will be encouraged to incorporate energy efficiency designs into the project and will be given information and source referrals.

In addition to energy efficiency, other examples of sustainable development recommended by the County includes: 1) effective stormwater management practices to prevent run-off from going into the 12 square miles of surface water, 2) on-site reuse of demolition materials, 3) preservation of existing wooded and

vegetated on properties, 4) assistance in achieving a "Clean Corporate Citizen" designation as awarded by the MDEQ, and 5) promoting energy efficient strategies such as geo-thermal, solar, or wind generation for heating and cooling purposes.

As new developments are put in place using Michigan's Brownfields process (including implementation of Due Care Plans), residents are protected from exposure to contaminants found on Brownfields. Branch County is committed to continue maximizing EPA grant assessment funds and emphasizing energy efficiency through the LEED program and other sustainability practices to create a sustainable community and improve the quality of life for its residents.

ii. (5 points) One example of efforts taken in planning to integrate equitable development is the City of Coldwater and the Village of Union City's Biennial Energy Optimization Plans (in partnership with MSCPA) that include incentives for commercial and industrial businesses within these jurisdictions to assist developers and existing customers in installing high efficiency equipment and long term performance of the buildings. In addition, a "direct install" approach is identified in Union City, which offers free or subsidized installation of lighting upgrades and setback thermostats to address energy efficiency concerns.

**c. Economic or non-Economic Benefits (long term benefits) [10 points]**

i. (5 points) The vacant and contaminated properties in Branch County are not producing a substantial tax income, are lowering neighboring property values, and are not providing employment opportunities. Currently, the unemployment rate in the County is 10.1%. The percentages of residential properties that are vacant within the County include: 13% in Union City, 11.8% in Bronson, 11.8% in Coldwater, and 14.7% in Quincy. In addition, the percentage of residents living in Branch County below the poverty line is 17.3%. Due to the concentration of residential housing, commercial, and industrial properties within 8% of the County's land space, redevelopment of abandoned and blighted properties is heavily based on the availability of Brownfields assessment funds. The use of Brownfields incentives including assessment grant funds and tax incentives greatly increases the likelihood of development of Central Business Districts and blighted buildings.

The cost to developers to rehabilitate older buildings is often much greater than it would be to build new. A Brownfields designation and the accompanying grant and tax incentives often bridge the gap for the developer to choose to move forward with such a project or not. Encouraging the re-use of existing buildings has a twofold effect. First it offers cities the ability to shape their community by finding new uses for old buildings that are often empty and detract from a positive perception of the area. Secondly, it also helps preserve the recreational and green spaces surrounding municipalities that might otherwise become targets for new development. Finding uses for existing buildings often reinvigorates downtowns by bringing new business opportunities and people to the area. By taking a proactive approach to identify specific buildings and areas for redevelopment we can help shape what the future will look like for what may otherwise be a decaying area.

As sites are redeveloped, both Branch County and local developers will reap the economic benefits. High costs associated with environmental site assessments of properties will be covered under the grant, providing a liability exemption for the developer under the Michigan Voluntary Cleanup Program, while the County in turn offers the new developer tax incentives and TIF repayment through its Brownfields Redevelopment Authority. Thereby saving a new developer any added expenditures for assessment and cleanup costs. This also helps to address the County's number one goal of protecting human health by cleaning up existing contamination.

ii. (5 points) Former Governor Milliken once stated, "The 37 million acres that are Michigan is all the Michigan we will ever have....". We recognize the same could be said for our county. The main focus of this grant application is to convert existing, underutilized commercial and industrial properties to productive reuse in a manner that provides economic incentives to the community while reducing chemical and physical threats to humans and the environment and improving the residents' overall quality of life. Branch County will use the money from this grant to focus on redeveloping urban areas and protecting our green space from urban sprawl, while also promoting various job creation programs through partnerships with Michigan Works Region 3. Grant funds will be marketed to businesses moving to the area by Michigan Works and Michigan Works grant funds will be marketed to businesses utilizing Brownfields grant funds. By

redeveloping properties within urban areas, we are preserving our precious green areas which serve to attract people to both live and play. This will help to support a sustainable and vibrant Branch County.

**5. Programmatic Capability and Past Performance [40 points]**

**a. Programmatic Capability [24 points]** The Branch County Board of Commissioners created the BCBRA for the purpose redeveloping Brownfields in the county by taking full advantage of the powers given to Brownfields redevelopment authorities to removing barriers to reuse and redevelopment associated with Brownfields. The authority is made up of representatives from a variety of business sectors, local townships and cities, as well as county government. The authority meets once a month to review public nominations of sites to the Brownfields site inventory – developed under a previous EPA Brownfields site assessment grant – and approves site assessment work on high priority sites. The county treasurer holds the position of authority treasurer – ensuring accurate tracking and management of grant funds as well as assessment and redevelopment projects implemented using Michigan's TIF tools. In addition, the BCBRA meets with community agencies and groups to discuss Brownfields reuse and redevelopment.

Mr. Bud Norman, Branch County Administrator, will be the administrator of the County's Grant. Mr. Norman has over 4 years of experience managing Brownfields grants. Mr. Norman will draw on other County staff to assist with administrative and financial management of the grant. The grant management team will consist of the BCBRA board, headed by Mr. Dale Swift, Branch County Commissioners Chairperson. BRA members have participated in several Brownfields redevelopment and grant administration educational programs, including the national Brownfields conference. As a 2008 recipient of a EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant for both hazardous and petroleum substances, the County has been incredibly successful in promoting Brownfields redevelopment throughout the county. Branch County also maintains a written policy for transition of responsibilities should a staff member leave the organization.

The BCBRA has successfully managed a EPA Site Assessment Grant for the past 4 years. The management system proposed for the assessment project is the same management system utilized for the County's past grant program. In addition to the experience and capabilities of existing staff, Branch County will procure the services of a qualified professional services consultant to assist with assessment tasks. The procurement process will be competitive, transparent, and will comply with the Procurement Standards in 40 CFR Part 30 or 40 CFR 31.36, as applicable. the County has extensive experience in the procurement of qualified professional services and consultant firms for grant programs of various types.

**b. Audit Findings [2 points]** Branch County has successfully managed a 2008 EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant for both petroleum and hazardous substance sites. The County has complied with all the regulations regarding the management and procurement methods required and have not received adverse audit findings. The County maintains strict accounting and financial records which are audited annually. Further, the County is not required to comply with special "high-risk" terms and conditions.

**c. Past Performance and Accomplishments [14 points]**

**i. Currently or Has Ever Received an Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund or Cleanup Grant (14 points)**

1. Compliance with Grant Requirements (7 points) In October 2008, the County was awarded both a \$200K Petroleum Substance and \$200K Hazardous Substance Brownfields grant to address contaminated properties within the County. The 2008 grant was completed in December 2012. Branch County completed numerous successes including two highlighted projects as follows. The first location is along North Matteson Street in the City of Bronson. This project involved the completion of an environmental site assessment (Phase I and II ESA) and human health risk screening (BEA) to evaluate the potential environmental concerns related to redevelopment of a 6-acre property into a cabinet manufacturing business. The owner private financing to purchase and redevelop the property along with the EPA assessment grant funds.

The second site is located in the City of Coldwater and consists of a vacant, 10-acre industrial property located in the heart of a historical residential neighborhood. The property operated as a foundry from 1854 through 1990 when it was abandoned. All structures have been removed from the property, which has sat as a concrete and debris covered eye sore for the past 22 years. The City of Coldwater is pursuing a purchase of the property to redevelop the site as a recreational soccer facility and a solar array field with

green training center. A cost share was completed with the City of Coldwater and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) have been proposed to pay for redevelopment of the property.

Branch County has met all of the requested and required reporting actions for the previous grant, including submittal of quarterly activity reports, and financial reports. The County initially completed a QAPP per EPA grant requirements prior to proceeding with site assessments and has submitted the 3-year updates for the QAPP. Achievement of work plan deliverables and work products, including: eligibility determinations, SAPs, HASPs, Phase I ESAs, Phase II ESAs, BEAs, and Due Care Plans were regularly reported to the EPA via quarterly reporting. Work plan deliverables and work products were also entered into the ACRES database in a timely fashion. The EPA Project Officer for the grant was kept informed of ongoing assessment activities in their determination of eligibilities for hazardous substance sites and reviewing the MDEQ Project Manager's eligibility approvals for petroleum substance sites. Projects with time-sensitive aspects which could have impacted the ability of the BCBRA to meet a work plan deliverable were communicated with the EPA Project Officer.

2. Accomplishments (7 points) Branch County highlighted the following accomplishments under the 2008 grants:

- Branch County conducted two public outreach sessions to educate the community about Brownfields redevelopment and its EPA grant. A combination of residents, elected officials, state and local government officials, environmental professionals, real estate professionals, and various community members attended these sessions. The sessions resulted in educating the community and several site nominations.
- Branch County had their consultant speak at several County economic development seminars regarding the award of the grant and accomplishments of the grant since 2008.
- To date 20 sites have been assessed with a Phase I ESA, Phase II ESA, BEA, and/or Due Care Plan (i.e., human health risk screening and evaluations).
- Assessment activities included the transfer of a former marl cement company property that adjoins Marble Lake to the Village of Quincy for use as a recreational park.
- Assistance was provided to a local manufacturing site to help delineate a solvent plume beneath the building in association with a MDEQ Clean-up Grant the business has received for removing the contamination.
- A Brownfields Plan was drafted for redevelopment of a former gasoline service station into a new Dollar General, creating new jobs in the area for construction work and retaining existing jobs at the former Dollar General location.
- A Phase I, Phase II, BEA, Due Care Plan, and Brownfields Plan were completed at a vacant 1.5-acre lot along East Chicago Street for the redevelopment of a Culver's Restaurant. This stretch of East Chicago Street from I-69 into the heart of Coldwater is packed on both sides with commercial, educational, medical, and residential properties. As illustrated in the City of Coldwater's 2002 Master Plan, the project is located within the City's General Business District (C-4 zoning), which describes properties intended to meet the needs of highway oriented business requiring high visibility, relatively large land area, and outdoor display areas. This property was the only underutilized parcel on this stretch of federal highway, and had been vacant since 1977. A prime piece of real estate, located less than ¼ mile away from I-69 and along a federal highway, the property has faced the stigma of Brownfields since the truck stop was razed.
- Assistance was provided to a Pennsylvania-based manufacturing company, who was looking to expand to the Midwest, and looked at sites in Branch County, Indiana, and Ohio. Branch County was able to secure the proposed development utilizing EPA Brownfields Assessment funding for conducting due diligence activities. The property will be purchased in December 2012 and will bring up to 60 new jobs to the area struggling with a decreasing workforce.
- All assessed sites and accomplishments have been entered in the EPA on-line ACRES database. In addition to ACRES, Branch County created a web map of Brownfields inventory sites assessed under the grant to allow easy public access this grant achievement information.
- Completion of all required quarterly reporting.
- Formation of LSRRF with projected capture currently at \$110K

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**THRESHOLD DOCUMENTATION**



## **THRESHOLD DOCUMENTATION**

### **1. Applicant Eligibility**

Branch County is a Michigan local unit of government as described in 40 CFR Part 31, and is eligible to receive funding through the EPA Brownfields Assessment Grants program.

### **2. Letter from the State**

Attachment B presents a letter of support for this proposal from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). Attachment C presents letters of support from other project partners and supporters.

### **3. Community Involvement**

Branch County intends to inform and involve the community and stakeholders through multiple communication conduits including:

- Sponsoring community outreach and education forums (success was achieved with this method during 2007 Brownfields Assessment Grants);
- Advertising through various outlets (website, community partners, printed marketing materials, etc.) and encouraging public participation during monthly Branch County Brownfields Redevelopment Authority (BCBRA) meetings, as required by Michigan Public Act (P.A.) 381 of 1996, as amended.

The aforementioned activities demonstrate Branch County's commitment to involve the community and other stakeholders during the planning, implementation and other Brownfields Assessment activities that will be performed under this Grant.

### **4. Site Eligibility and Property Ownership Eligibility**

Branch County is applying for a community-wide assessment grant; therefore, no site eligibility or property ownership eligibility criterion applies.

**ATTACHMENT B**

**LETTER FROM ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORITY**



RICK SNYDER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
LANSING



DAN WYANT  
DIRECTOR

January 10, 2013

Mr. Michael Norman  
County Administrator  
Branch County  
31 Division Street  
Coldwater, Michigan 49036

Dear Mr. Norman:

SUBJECT: Acknowledgment Regarding the United States Environmental Protection Agency  
Brownfield Assessment Grant Proposals

Thank you for your notice and request for a letter of acknowledgment for Branch County's proposals to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) brownfield grant program. The Department of Environmental Quality, Remediation and Redevelopment Division (RRD), is supportive of county-based redevelopment efforts and has reviewed the information you provided regarding your proposals.

Branch County is applying for a \$200,000 hazardous substances assessment grant and a \$200,000 petroleum assessment grant which can be used to conduct assessment activities at eligible brownfield sites in the county. Branch County is considered eligible for these grants as a general purpose unit of local government.

Should the EPA award these brownfield grants to Branch County, it would promote redevelopment and reuse of underutilized and contaminated properties and improve the economic development and environmental conditions in the county. If you need further information or assistance regarding specific brownfield sites, please contact Mr. Ron Smedley, Brownfield Redevelopment Coordinator, RRD, at 517-284-5153, or you may contact me.

Sincerely,

Carrie Geyer, Chief  
Brownfield Redevelopment Unit  
Program Support Section  
Remediation and Redevelopment Division  
517-284-5182

cc: Ms. Linda Mangrum USEPA Region 5  
Mr. Ron Smedley, DEQ

**ATTACHMENT C**

**LETTERS FROM SUPPORT PARTNERS**



"Your Local  
Health Department"

[www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org)

## Branch - Hillsdale - St. Joseph Community Health Agency

570 N. Marshall Road  
Coldwater, MI 49036  
(517) 279-9561  
1-800-482-9561  
Fax (517) 278-2923

20 Care Drive  
Hillsdale, MI 49242  
(517) 437-7395  
1-888-544-7395  
Fax (517) 437-0166

1110 Hill Street  
Three Rivers, MI 49093  
(269) 273-2161  
1-800-258-1092  
Fax (269) 273-2452

January 21, 2014

Michael 'Bud' Norman, Administrator  
Branch County  
Branch County Courthouse  
31 Division Street  
Coldwater, Michigan 49036

RE: 2014 EPA Brownfields Site Assessment Grant

Dear Mr. Norman,

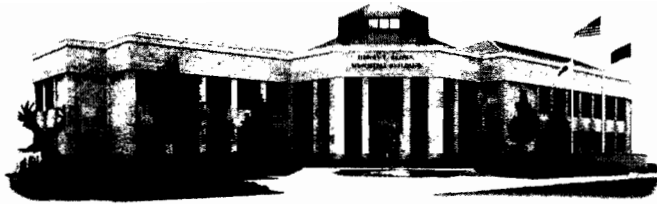
The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency – also known as the Tri-County Health Department – has an environmental health focus on food services sanitation and licensing, drinking water well permitting, and septic permitting. Hazardous substance and petroleum contamination regulation, response, and cleanup activities in Michigan are the primary responsibility of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). When long-term environmental contamination threatens to impact drinking water sources, however, our Health Agency is notified in order to observe activities around contaminated areas and ensure that due care is followed – such as making sure well permits are not authorized in areas of known groundwater contamination. We support Branch County's application for an EPA Brownfields Site Assessment Grant and are encouraged by the potential for assessing suspected contaminated sites around the county and fully characterizing known contaminated sites.

In support of the grant and the County's brownfield redevelopment efforts, we commit to a liaison role between the MDEQ and the County. Information we receive about local areas of environmental contamination will be provided to the County. We will also notify the County of other brownfield sites as we become aware of them, such as areas in the County contaminated by historical coal gasification operations and newly discovered methamphetamine manufacturing sites. We will also be available to review the County's brownfield site inventory and use our institutional knowledge of the community to add to and improve it. As our resources allow, we will also assist with water sampling activities at sites where contamination could impact drinking water and human health.

Sincerely,

Steve Todd  
Health Officer  
Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency





**CITY of COLDWATER**  
**Henry L. Brown Municipal Building**  
One Grand Street  
Coldwater, Michigan 49036  
(517) 279-9501    [www.coldwater.org](http://www.coldwater.org)

January 22, 2014

Mr. Michael 'Bud' Norman, Administrator  
Branch County  
Branch County Court House  
31 Division Street  
Coldwater, Michigan 49036

**RE: Letter of Support for FY2014 U.S. EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant Application**

Dear Mr. Norman:

The City of Coldwater is pleased to provide this letter in support of Branch County's application for assessment and cleanup planning under the FY2014 EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant program. The City has enjoyed a productive partnership in the previous assessment grant including the following projects of significance:

	<u>Leveraged Capital Investment</u>	<u>Leveraged Cleanup/ Infrastructure Dollars</u>	<u>Jobs Created/Retained</u>
MCRE, LLC – Retail Development Project	\$950,000	\$132,000	5
M2 Enterprises – Restaurant Development	\$2,200,000	\$196,000	44

Environmental assessments and cleanup planning (i.e. Brownfield Plans, cleanup plans to evaluate continuing obligations under federal law) were conducted at each of the property supporting the sale of these contaminated and underutilized Brownfield sites.

Additionally, the assessment grant was used to conduct environmental assessment and cleanup planning activities at a vacant, former foundry site located in a historic neighborhood and within blocks of the city center of Coldwater. Grant activities helped facilitate the acquisition of the site by the City of Coldwater for a proposed recreational (e.g. soccer field) and sustainable energy development. The \$5,000,000 energy development will include a green energy training center and a power generation facility including a renewable energy solar field. The solar array will be operated by two nonprofit wholesale power supply and public power entities.

Mr. Michael 'Bud' Norman, Administrator  
Page 2  
January 22, 2014

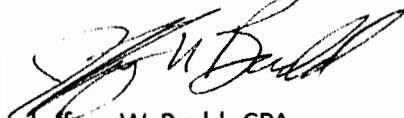
Even with these successes, the City of Coldwater has historic manufacturing and commercial Brownfield sites that need further investigation and evaluation before their market potential can be realized. Therefore, the Brownfields Assessment Grant is one tool critical to addressing redevelopment efforts of the city and throughout the county.

We appreciate the opportunity to continue working with Branch County as a stakeholder and partner. The City's role under the proposed assessment grant will consist of promoting and participating in inter-governmental collaboration, assisting with community outreach by disseminating grant brochures and program information, promoting the assessment project and providing input and feedback to the County with respect to our knowledge of Brownfield sites of concern.

The City of Coldwater remains committed to improving regional economic conditions and improve the quality of life for our residents.

Sincerely,

CITY OF COLDWATER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffery W. Budd", is written over the printed name.

Jeffery W. Budd, CPA  
City Manager

JWB/js



January 20, 2014

Mr. Michael 'Bud' Norman, Administrator  
Branch County  
Branch County Court House  
31 Division Street  
Coldwater, Michigan 49036

RE: FY2014 U.S. EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant Application

Dear Mr. Norman:

The City of Bronson is pleased to offer its support for Branch County's application for the FY2014 EPA Brownfield Assessment Grants. The City has enjoyed a productive partnership in the past with the county and its Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and looks forward to this opportunity to redevelop the brownfields in our community.

Bronson has benefited from previous EPA Brownfield Assessment Grants that included an evaluation of multiple, adjacent parcels surrounding two Superfund sites. Previous grant funds assisted the startup of small businesses, including a wood cabinet manufacturing shop and provided health benefits to the general public through evaluation of human health risks posed by existing contamination. Even with these successes, the City of Bronson has historic manufacturing sites that need further investigation and evaluation before their market potential can be realized. Therefore, the Assessment Grant is one tool that has been instrumental in the redevelopment efforts of the City of Bronson.

Going forward, our role in support of the assessment grant will include coordination with the county, providing meeting locations, distributing information to local businesses, and assisting the Authority by helping select and rank properties and projects for the Authority's assessment efforts.

Very truly yours,  
THE CITY OF BRONSON

Mark L. Heydlauff, MPA  
City Manager

141 S. Matteson Street | Bronson, MI 49028  
Phone: 517-369-7334 | Fax: 517-369-1457  
[www.bronson-mi.com](http://www.bronson-mi.com)



January 16, 2014

Mr. Michael 'Bud' Norman, Administrator  
Branch County  
Branch County Court House  
31 Division Street  
Coldwater, Michigan 49036

Dear Mr. Norman,

The Bronson Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is looking forward to working with the City of Bronson and Branch County and is in full support of Branch County's application for FY2014 EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant funding. As we strive to build the economy of the City of Bronson, it is imperative that the DDA support the County in this effort to promote economic development.

Our Board stands ready to assist the City of Bronson and Branch County. Our role will be to  
1) work with the County and its Brownfield Redevelopment Authority to assess the environmental conditions of our key redevelopment projects for eligibility for the grant, and  
2) provide information on the grants to downtown businesses through our website and marketing materials.

As a community partner, the Bronson DDA is excited to support the goals and objectives of the EPA Brownfield Assessment program and is eager to work with the City of Bronson and the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority to further market the resources of the Authority to the community. We look forward to furthering our commitment to improving the quality of life for our community through our support of the brownfield redevelopment efforts.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Derek Shaw", is written over a horizontal line.

Derek Shaw  
Chairman  
Board of Directors  
Bronson Downtown Development Authority



1-800-285-WORKS (9675)

Serving Barry, Branch and Calhoun Counties

Calhoun I.S.D. · 17111 G Drive North · Marshall, Michigan 49068 · Ph 269-789-2423 · Fax 269-781-8792

January 20, 2014

Michael 'Bud' Norman, Administrator  
Branch County  
Branch County Courthouse  
31 Division Street  
Coldwater, Michigan 49036

RE: FY2014 U.S. EPA Community-wide Brownfields Site Assessment Grant

Dear Mr. Norman,

The Calhoun ISD Michigan Works! and the Calhoun Intermediate School District (Calhoun ISD) are pleased to provide this letter of support for Branch County's application to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for a Brownfields Site Assessment Grant..

The local Michigan Works!, which covers Barry, Branch and Calhoun counties, is administered by the Calhoun ISD and provides staffing to the Workforce Development Board. Our region oversees the federal and state funded workforce development services for three counties through service centers in each county including one in Branch County located in the City of Coldwater. Michigan Works! collaborates with workforce, education and economic development partners to keep business competitive, to retain, and to create jobs. The Calhoun ISD provides educational services and support to 13 constituent school districts and for public school academies. We work to develop, coordinate and provide research-based education services.

Assessing brownfields in Branch County will create business growth opportunities and a need for new and expanding business to recruit skilled local workers. Our role in the Branch County brownfield assessment project will include sharing information about the project grant funds available to potential employers seeking to locate in the county. The Branch County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority will be informed of projects requiring brownfield redevelopment assistance and invited to meet with prospective purchasers to discuss grant funds and the best way to access them. Removing the often considerable costs of reusing brownfield sites, will encourage concentrated development in the County's existing communities and improve livability by replacing vacant and often blighted buildings with productive businesses or green space.

Battle Creek Service Center  
135 Hamblin Avenue  
Battle Creek, MI 49017  
(269) 660-1412

Coldwater Service Center  
210 Vista Drive  
Coldwater, MI 49036  
(517) 278-0200

Hastings Service Center  
535 West Woodlawn Avenue  
Hastings, MI 49058  
(269) 945-9545, Ex. 144

*THE CISD MICHIGAN WORKS! WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER/PROGRAM. AUXILIARY AIDS AND SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES UPON REQUEST. MICHIGAN RELAY CENTER (800) 649-3777*

[www.michpartners.org](http://www.michpartners.org)



Mr. Bud Norman  
January 20, 2014

We look forward to working with Branch County to support brownfield assessment and redevelopment. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact M.J. Bruns at 269-789-2423.

Sincerely,



M.J. Bruns, Director  
Michigan Works!-Calhoun ISD



Dr. Terance Lunger, Superintendent  
Calhoun Intermediate School District



935 North Washington Avenue  
Lansing, MI 48906  
517-372-5374 Fax 517-482-8244  
www.micounties.org  
Timothy K. McGuire, Executive Director

January 16, 2014

Michael 'Bud' Norman, Administrator  
Branch County  
Branch County Courthouse  
31 Division Street  
Coldwater, Michigan 49036  
Subject: EPA Brownfield Site Assessment Grant

Dear Mr. Norman,

The Michigan Association of Counties Service Corporation is pleased to provide this letter of support for your U.S. EPA hazardous substance and petroleum brownfields site assessment grant application. Branch County has a proven track record of success in using these funds to promote brownfields redevelopment, and while the county has made significant progress in assessing numerous sites, we understand that much more needs to be done and further funding needed to remove the stigma of known or suspected contamination at remaining brownfield sites throughout the county. In support of these ongoing efforts, we commit to provide the following resources to Branch County and the public:

- **MAC Education and Training Program:** provides access to online training sessions on topics including brownfields redevelopment, brownfields workshop presentations from previous MAC conferences, and brownfields educational material that can be downloaded and used as part of community outreach initiatives (through the board of commissioners).
- **MAC Ask the Expert Program:** allows counties to submit questions and receive answers about brownfields assessment, liability, and redevelopment from highly regarded brownfields professionals.
- **Web mapping:** MACSC previously worked with Branch County to design and implement a web map of the county's brownfield site inventory and grant progress, as part of community involvement efforts (<http://goo.gl/LzQNSy>). We will update this map with sites assessed under its new grant as an ongoing in-kind service – an estimated value of \$1,350 over a three year grant period.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if there is anything else the association can do to support your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Currie", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Steve Currie  
Deputy Director  
Michigan Association of Counties Service Corporation



January 20, 2014

Michael 'Bud' Norman, Administrator  
County of Branch  
Branch County Courthouse  
31 Division Street  
Coldwater, Michigan 49036

RE: FY2014 U.S. EPA Community-wide Brownfields Site Assessment Grant

Dear Mr. Norman:

As Executive Director of the Branch County Community Foundation, I am very pleased to provide this letter of support for Branch County's FY2014 Brownfields Assessment Grant application to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Community Foundation serves as a hub for community networks in Branch County – providing resources, offering grants for organizational development, and convening organizations around collaborative efforts.

As a neutral organization we see an opportunity under this grant to serve in the much needed role of an information connection between the County and its Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and Community Cased Organizations (CBO) that would otherwise be difficult for the County to maintain connections with. As an example, we maintain a very close partnership with the Arab American Society of Coldwater (AASC), and meeting almost monthly.

Once the County receives this brownfields grant, we will provide notice to the AASC and other CBOs along with information about how they can access grant funds when reusing brownfield sites and nominate sites of concern for environmental assessment under the grant.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Colleen Knight".

Colleen Knight, Executive Director  
Branch County Community Foundation



387 N. Willowbrook Rd.  
Suite F  
Coldwater, MI 49036

Ph: (517) 278-2725 ext. 5  
Fax: (517) 278-5176

January 20, 2014

Michael 'Bud' Norman, Administrator  
Branch County  
Branch County Courthouse  
31 Division Street  
Coldwater, Michigan 49036

Subject: EPA Brownfield Site Assessment Grant

Dear Mr. Norman,

The Branch County Conservation District works directly with Branch County residents on a wide range of soil and water conservation programs that include Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP), tree sales, native plant sales and the Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps) insect water monitoring program. We frequently work with coalitions of committed people, lake associations, townships, villages and unincorporated communities while developing 319 watershed management plans for the land use surrounding the streams and rivers that flow through Branch County. The most recent of these is a plan for the Prairie River Watershed, which includes parts of Branch and Saint Joseph Counties in Michigan as well as Steuben County in Indiana. Branch County has been an important partner in the development of this plan, particularly the Branch County Drain Commissioner and the Branch County Road Commission.

Potential contamination from brownfield sites is a real concern for the health of County residents and the quality of the environment they live in. The work of the Branch County Brownfield Program has already done a lot to reduce the unknowns and evaluate risks for brownfield sites in the County. However, we understand that there are still many locations where site investigation work is needed to measure risks and create management plans to prevent the spread of contamination. We support the County's application for an EPA Brownfield Site Assessment Grant and will have an active role in making the grant successful. We will provide space for the Brownfield Program at our Annual Tree and Native Plant Sale as well as our Farm Field Day event. Members of the Branch County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority will also be invited to our Annual Meeting and Conservation Expo to speak and distribute Brownfield Program information. Announcement of the grant award, regular updates, and opportunities for people to nominate sites for work under the grant will be provided in our newsletter and through our email list.

Sincerely,

Kathy Worst  
Administrator  
Branch Conservation District

# **COLDWATERCOUNTRY**

## **PURE MICHIGAN**

### **Branch County Economic Growth Alliance**

January 17, 2014

Mr. Michael 'Bud' Norman, Administrator  
Branch County  
Branch County Court House  
31 Division Street  
Coldwater, Michigan 49036

RE: Community Support for FY2014 U.S. EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant Application

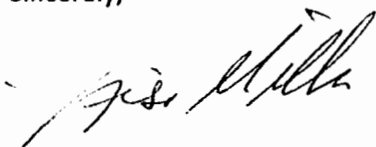
Dear Mr. Norman,

The Branch County Economic Growth Alliance (BCEGA) is pleased to provide this letter in support of Branch County's application to the U.S. EPA for Brownfield Assessment Grant funding to assess and promote redevelopment of Brownfield sites within Branch County. The BCEGA's mission is to create, retain and expand jobs in Branch County by attracting new industries to the county, assisting local industries in expansion efforts, and creating an environment where businesses and industries can succeed. In collaborating with Branch County, we know the county was successful utilizing its previous assessment grant to characterize several Brownfields; many of which led to redevelopment and job creation. However, more Brownfield funding is needed to promote and support redevelopment and to continue boosting the local economy.

As you know, the BCEGA is a community resource that assists to strengthens existing businesses and in the recruitment of new businesses by providing access to resources such as economic incentives in addition to business planning assistance and site location, etc. Our partnership with Branch County is longstanding and strong. Our role in the assessment grant project will consist of coordinating and participating with the county and its Brownfield Redevelopment Authority in outreach activities, promote and advertise the assessment project to prospective businesses under the incentive packaging, site selection and business planning processes.

The BCEGA remains committed to improving regional economic conditions and will continue to provide its resources to support Branch County's Brownfield redevelopment initiatives.

Sincerely,



Lisa Miller, Executive Director  
Branch County Economic Growth Alliance